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C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 002629

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [VE](#) [OAS](#)
SUBJECT: VENEZUELA: NO CLOSER TO ACCEPTANCE OF GOV VICTORY
BY OPPOSITION

REF: CARACAS 2624

Classified By: Abelardo A. Arias, Political Counselor, for Reason
1.4(d)

Summary

[1](#). (U) In a press conference August 16, former U.S. President Jimmy Carter and Organization of American States (OAS) Secretary General Cesar Gaviria announced that the results of

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their quick count coincide with the results announced by the National Electoral Council (CNE) giving President Chavez a victory in the referendum. Coordinadora Democratica leader Alberto Quiros Corradi acknowledged the pronouncements by the Carter Center and OAS, but questioned the discrepancy between Sumate's exit polls and the quick counts. Quiros insisted on an audit of the voters' paper receipts. National Electoral Council (CNE) Director Jorge Rodriguez denied opposition claims of tampering with the voting machine software and recalled that opposition representatives were present at all stages of the software process. Representatives of Sumate said they had "serious doubts" that the will of the Venezuelan had been respected in the referendum at a press conference at 4:15 p.m. Although the morning was quiet in Caracas, there were small demonstrations in the afternoon. At one, eight people were reportedly injured by gunfire, including opposition congressman Alvarado, and one woman was killed. End Summary.

Carter Center and OAS Confirm CNE Results

[2](#). (U) In a press conference August 16, former U.S. President Jimmy Carter and Organization of American States (OAS) Secretary General Cesar Gaviria announced that the results of

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their quick count coincide with the results announced by the National Electoral Council (CNE) giving President Chavez a victory in the referendum. The international observers noted that more than 10 million Venezuelans voted. According to Carter, the international observer missions worked together to conduct a quick count, using a methodology they have used in many other countries. After auditing the data from the voting machines (actas) from 192 tables, their quick count matched almost exactly with the CNE's results. Carter confirmed that he was in the totalization room at 1:00 a.m. with all five directors of the CNE.

[3](#). (U) Carter said Sumate also did a quick count based on the same voting machine data and showed 55% for "No" and 45% for "Si," which was very close to the Carter Center and OAS results. Gaviria said that they are getting closer to the exact results, and there is a clear tendency in favor of "No." Gaviria noted that in addition to the quick counts, the Venezuelan system allows for another type of control: the physical ballots. Carter said the physical ballots would be available to be counted. According to Gaviria, "it would be very difficult to manipulate the numbers." He said he understood that some might doubt about the results, but that is different from having evidence of fraud. So far, he said, there has been no evidence of fraud in the referendum.

Opposition Calls for Count of Paper Ballots

[4](#). (U) Coordinadora Democratica leader Alberto Quiros Corradi acknowledged the pronouncements by the Carter Center and OAS, but questioned the discrepancy between Sumate's exit polls and the quick counts. According to Sumate exit polls, the "Si" vote had won a majority. Quiros Corradi noted that there could be two explanations for the discrepancy: the numbers were manipulated in the transmission of the data, or the machine data does not reflect the physical votes in the

ballot boxes. Therefore, he said, the opposition is

insisting on a count of the paper ballots. He said at least 180 ballot boxes selected at random should be counted and compared against the corresponding voting machine data (the actas). He called on the international community and the international observers to ensure that the CNE counts the ballot boxes, saying that the opposition has "reasonable doubt." "The only way to know the truth is to go to the boxes," he concluded.

CNE Releases More Results

15. (U) CNE Director Jorge Rodriguez announced the "No" carried all but two states (Miranda and Tachira) and the federal district of Caracas. Rodriguez said the overwhelming 75 percent turnout of registered voters -- a record for Venezuela -- was the main reason for delays in voting lines. He said statistics showed the fingerprint machines were responsible for only short delays in the morning; six million fingerprints were taken for use in future elections. Rodriguez recognized that the voting table procedure caused most delays and called for it to be re-designed to accommodate the pace of electronic voting. He also said the distribution of voting centers needs to be re-engineered to be more democratic and better accommodate voters in poor areas.

16. (U) Rodriguez denied opposition claims of tampering with the software for the voting machines and recalled that opposition representatives were present at all stages of the software process. He said he would welcome further audits as proposed by the opposition if it would lead to increased tranquillity and but not as a basis for building a fraud case. He reminded the opposition that it was they who pushed for quick counts from the OAS and Carter Center and for a quick release of results by the CNE, something he said opposition leaders are now complaining about.

Sumate Expresses Doubts

17. (U) Representatives of Sumate said they had "serious doubts" the will of the Venezuelan had been respected in the referendum at a press conference at 4:15 p.m. Enrique Palacios said Sumate had conducted exit polls in 300 voting centers throughout the day on August 15, resulting in a 59-41 tendency in favor of the opposition (with 20,382 interviews). Despite the statistical validity of this sample, he said, Sumate's quick count of tally sheets (actas) showed a 55-45 tendency in favor of the GOV. Citing one center in a pro-opposition area of Caracas with 2,734 voters, Palacios said their exit poll showed an 85-percent lead, but the final acta showed only a 53-percent lead. Further, Palacios noted that 1,750 persons registered to this center had signed the petitions against President Hugo Chavez, but the final acta showed only 905 "yes" votes. Maria Corina Machado proposed a statistically valid audit of all the paper receipts generated by the referendum. She asked international observers to take immediate custody of the voter receipts to preserve their integrity.

Protests, Rallies and Violence

18. (U) Opposition groups closed a major avenue in Caracas and opposition leaders are calling for rallies in several parts of the city, but the turnout is small. In Plaza Altamira, the site of previous opposition protests, several Chavez supporters on motorcycles began to fire upon a crowd that had gathered, and at least six people were injured and one woman was killed. Solidaridad Deputy Ernesto Alvarenga, a former Chavez supporter turned opposition leader, was wounded in the shooting in Altamira. A small group of protesters are still demonstrating outside the hotel where international observers

from the OAS and Carter Center are staying, and where they have been since this morning. Chavez supporters have interrupted occasionally some of Caracas' major thoroughfares. Metropolitan police directed people onto alternate routes.
Shapiro

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